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ABSTRACT

The history of violence on university campuses mirrors that of the surrounding culture--students bring their values and standards of conduct with them to the university. This paper traces historical events which associate violence with university settings to give a sense of today's situation. The focus is on four periods representing important stages in the development of the modern university and in understanding the violent events which have occurred on campuses: (1) the roots of the modern university system in the Middle Ages; (2) the American Colonial period and beyond; (3) the postwar era; and (4) the recent past. The paper points out that on today's campuses, alcohol is involved in over 90% of campus crime, and drinking "for the specific purpose of getting drunk" is on the rise. The paper notes that a recent survey of 3300 administrators indicated that only 56.4% of reported physical assaults resulted in any institutional penalty whatsoever; the most likely profile of the student criminal is a male who probably comes from a pathological family unit, is a member of a fraternity, is an academically marginal or poor student, and also an athlete. The paper estimates that one in three students will be the victim of some type of campus crime and lists 20 criminal incidents which occurred between 1966 and 1997 and were published in daily newspapers. The paper notes that 1990's Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act was the result of the 1986 murder of a student whose parents afterwards crusaded for legislation requiring institutions of higher education which accepted federal financial aid funds to annually release information to students and to the public concerning various types of crimes on campus. Contains 22 references. (NKA)

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The Ivory Tower in Violent America:

An Historical Perspective

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"The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction." (Sigmund Freud, 1930)

I - Introduction

Violence on college campuses has had a long and often bloody history. Nathan Schachner in his history of mediaeval universities writes, for example, "Consider that a University meant a great concourse of men and boys, far from their homes, freed from all parental restrictions, introduced perhaps for the first time to the delights of the tavern and the brothel; add to this the fact that in the Middle Ages violence and bloodshed were almost normal, so that the slitting of a throat was not regarded even by the church as the worst of mortal sins; and we need no other explanation of the turbulence and tumult of the Universities." (Schachner, 1938) Schachner's reference to the violence of the times is particularly appropriate since the history of violence on university campuses appears to roughly mirror that of the surrounding culture. Students bring their values and standards of conduct with them to the university.

My intention in this paper is to trace enough of the historical events which associate violence with university settings to give a sense of how we got to be where we are today. Universities have typically enjoyed a privileged status since their beginnings. They have always been concerned with protecting their image and have typically been resistant to publicizing negative events occurring within their borders. Many have been equally resistant to establishing a set of campus norms which could be expected to reduce violence.

I will focus on four periods which I believe represent important stages in the development of the modern university and in the understanding of the violent events which

have occurred on its campuses. First, the roots of the modern university system in the Middle Ages; second, the American Colonial period and beyond; third, the postwar era; and, finally, the recent past.

II - The Late Mediaeval Period (approximately 1000-1450 A.D.)

The university as we know it today began in the 11th century with the European diocesan cathedral schools, some of which grew to become "studia generalia," places where students came from afar to study at the feet of the well-known masters of the time. (Smith, 1988) Students sat on a straw-laden floor, doing what they could to take verbatim notes on lectures in preparation for the "recitations" to follow. The term "universitas" (literally "the whole") was originally applied in the 13th century to the groups of students and masters who gathered together, much like the artisan guilds of the time, for self-interest, influence, and protection against leaders placed over them by the various popes, kings, and noblemen. Only later did the term "university" come to stand for both the group and the place as it does today. (Schachner, 1938)

Historical records indicate that friction and violence often broke out between the scholars and the local townspeople who generally viewed the scholars as leading an easy and privileged life compared to their own. Hostilities between the citizens of Bologna and local scholars, for example, caused Frederick Barbarossa, King of Sicily and Naples, to issue his *Habita* in 1158. The *Habita* was designed to encourage students to study in his domain by assuring them of special privileges, rights, immunities, and protection from many of the laws of the civil courts. In one dictate, students had been raised to the status of a privileged class.

This was the first known charter of its type; others were to follow. (ibid.)

The granting of special privileges to students led the way for the granting of privileges to the masters and, often, anyone affiliated with the university. Masters and scholars were exempted from military service, taxes, and, most importantly, were placed under the jurisdiction of special courts in which only they could be tried. Students were reported to have taken full advantage of their privileged status as they often "ran wild" engaging in gambling, drinking, and pursuing the women of the town. Clashes and violence were common between townfolk and students and often between the students themselves. (ibid.)

A particularly violent incident at Oxford in 1209 occurred when a scholar killed a woman of the town. Two (possibly three) students were eventually hung triggering the moving of students and masters out of Oxford to nearby Cambridge where a new university was established. Cambridge was thus born of violence! Five years later in 1214, King John, in a move to further entice students to study at Oxford, issued a special charter of privileges for the students of Oxford which gave them a great deal of power over the town and its people. Almost overnight, Oxford became a powerful university with great control over its destiny and the destiny of those living in its shadow. Any dispute between a member of the university community and a townsperson was bound to favor the university member. (ibid.)

Oxford's most serious riot occurred in 1354 on St. Scholastica's day. The riot started, as many did, in a tavern setting when students complained about bad wine. Mobs of citizens descended upon the university and its students. When the dust settled, Oxford had been obliterated. The few who escaped went to the king and were ultimately granted almost absolute control over the town including its trade, its market places, its weights and

measures, and its rent and pricing policies. Town officials were made to appear yearly as penitents in a local church on St. Scholastica's day to pray for the souls of the slain students. The town was also ordered to a pay a significant penalty to the university which is still paid to this day. (ibid.)

The granting of special privileges to students, first at Bologna and later at Paris and Oxford, appeared to be the prime source of hatred for the students and masters of the universities. Students were said to have flaunted their privileged status before the townspeople. To make matters worse, university court systems quickly acquired a reputation of being a farce. The most severe crimes would often lead to a small fine or the saying of a few prayers as punishment. Student life in the Middle Ages was filled with homicides, rapes, riots, and battles. Students carried weapons; masters feared for their lives. Universities of this time were not interested in controlling the behavior of their students outside the classroom, considering it a private affair. (ibid.)

The Middle Ages set the stage for much of what we associate with the modern university. Of particular importance is the tradition of the privileged status accorded to students regarding the jurisdiction over their behavior. There is no question that this history of privileges had an important influence on the charters and character of early universities of the American Colonial Period such as Harvard, Yale and Brown. (Norton, 1909)

III - The American Colonial Period & Beyond: The Roots of American Higher Education

Early English settlers who were educated brought with them the traditions of English higher education which existed at Oxford and Cambridge. (Thwing, 1906) Harvard University, founded in 1636, experienced instances of "town vs. gown" conflicts even in its earliest years. Corporal punishment at Harvard was common for about 100 years. Thomas Sargeant (class of 1674), for example, was publicly whipped for blasphemy and made to sit nude and alone at meals. (Baker & Rubel, 1980) Seventeenth century schools in New England operated on a "spare the rod, spoil the child" approach and colleges were no exception. Violence was a common theme in early American higher education.

The prevailing mood within the colleges of this time was authoritarian, strict, and rigorous. Students were allowed little freedom to express ideas or to question accepted thinking. The extant view was that, unlike in the mediaeval period, youth needed to be guided and controlled. (Butts, 1975) Riots, vandalism, and assaults were attributed to there being no place for the release of the tension which accrued as a result of the repressive atmosphere and unfriendly relations between professors and students. (ibid.) Student rebellions were often triggered by seemingly unimportant events. The first recorded riot at Harvard in 1766, for example, was set off by bad butter served in the commons. (Brubaker & Rudy, 1968)

Other campuses also had their problems. A series of conflicts at the University of Virginia in the 1830's resulted in the killing of a professor and the summoning of armed constables to restore order. Riots also occurred at Princeton and Yale. A total of six major campus rebellions occurred at Princeton between 1800 and 1830. Riots in 1802 led to the

burning of a library and in 1814 various outbuildings were set ablaze to protest the instructional system. (Baker & Rubel, 1980) Riots began at Yale in the 1760's and became particularly severe in the early 1800's. Some involved bad food and others were related to clashes with local firemen when, in 1858, a student shot and killed a fireman. (Smith, 1988) Most colleges of this time experienced violence and rebellion in reaction against strict discipline systems. Southern students were often at the center of the rebellions since they reacted very negatively to rules which they perceived to be fitted to slaves but not to "gentlemen."

Students involved in violent acts rarely received anywhere near the punishment which would have been meted out had they committed their acts outside of the protective context of a university setting. Secret campus courts were common during the 19th century. At Berkeley, for instance, faculty handed out sentences with limited ability to gather evidence; witnesses were not cross-examined, records were not kept, and hearings were completely closed. (Otten, 1970)

American college students through the 1930's were generally concerned with local campus issues rather than national or state policies. In the 1930's students began involving themselves in extra-campus affairs surrounding compulsory ROTC, farm strikes, free speech, and peace meetings. (ibid.) For the most part, however, colleges and universities were dealing with their own problems internally and students were not making many waves nationally. Cases which did receive court attention usually favored the autonomy of the universities. In 1913, for example, the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled that schools stand *in loco parentis* and disciplinary decisions involving students should not be interfered with by

the state. (Smith, 1988) Courts allowed schools to function autonomously, partially accounting for the dearth of statistics related to crime on campus. Prior to the 1960's there were few court cases involving American higher education. Very few state and federal regulations existed. The privileged status of the American university has resulted in a situation where it is difficult to assess the incidence of campus violence with any degree of confidence.

Transformations in American higher education began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with significant changes in the heterogeneity of the general population, traceable to increases in immigration. (Baker & Rubel, 1980) The passage of the Morrill Act in 1862 (a.k.a. the Land Grant Act) had a profound effect on higher education, opening up the practical sciences and professional occupations to a wider portion of the populus. (Butts, 1975) Enrollment in colleges increased fivefold in this relatively narrow time period. (Baker & Rubel, 1980) Campus populations came to more closely resemble the characteristics of the population-at-large, although attendance at a university or college was not yet to be the norm for the majority. Colleges and universities through the mid-1940's still catered to the privileged more often than not. World War II and the G.I. Bill were to change that forever. (Sykes, 1988)

IV - The Postwar Era: America Goes to College

From 1940 to 1980, the number of institutions of higher education in the U.S. doubled, the number of students increased eight times. By the fall of 1946, over one million veterans were enrolled in college classes under the G.I. Bill. Expectations about who goes to college changed to include a much larger percentage of the population. (ibid.) In many cases, universities grew to accommodate the increasing numbers by becoming "multiversities."

In the 1960's federal and state courts were flooded with cases related to Vietnam War and civil rights protests. A California court, for the first time in U.S. history, returned felony indictments against students for occupying an administration building at San Fernando Valley State College. Twenty-four students were indicted, 23 were convicted. The judge in the case, flying in the face of over 700 hundred years of tradition, stated that "college campuses are not privileged sanctuaries where disruptive, violent felonious acts go unpunished." Between 1969 and 1970, 44 states passed laws making it a crime to disrupt educational institutions. (Smith, 1988) Following the 60's and 70's, universities began moving toward shared governance with students, faculty, and administration. Due process rights became more important but self-policing, the protecting of students from the civil courts, and the attempt to maintain the image of the safe ivory-tower campus environment continued.

V - The Invaded Sanctuary: the Recent Past

Campuses of today are open. Curfews, gates, and obvious boundaries are for the most part lacking. Although residential students are still in the majority, the demographics of the contemporary college campus have come to include elements with a variety of descriptions: part-time students, commuting students, non-traditional students, returning adult students, continuing education students, those seeking upgrading of specific skills, those pursuing special certifications and/or licenses, "early-to-college" high school students, retirees taking special interest courses, and others. Students, due to their often infrequent presence on campus and large classes, have become more anonymous than ever. Admissions offices, fearing litigation, may not collect statistics on enrollees which would allow them to screen out individuals who might be prone toward violence. (Saunders, 1992) Those who have learned to carry weapons to protect themselves and elevate their status within their peer groups are increasingly likely to go to college. Robert Butterworth, a Los Angeles psychologist who counsels gang members, has stated that "college is no longer a sieve which filters out good kids from bad kids....Who is to say that kids carrying guns for protection won't go to college?" (Brown, 1994) Counseling centers are reporting dramatic increases in the number of students being seen who report significant family dysfunction, a well-known predisposing factor in the prediction of violent behavior. (Pezza, 1995)

Available campus crime statistics generally appear to support increases in violence over the last 30 years. (Nichols, 1995) Although some question whether crime on campus is really on the rise or whether we are simply becoming more attentive to it (Lederman, 1993), few argue that campus crimes are becoming more violent and increasingly involving firearms.

Few also argue that many universities and colleges have been quite creative in skewing crime statistics and images of campus life in their favor for fear of alienating alumni or adversely affecting admissions. Anne Matthews points to this in her 1993 article entitled "The Campus Crime Wave" in the N. Y. Times Magazine, stating that "Messy realities rarely surface in the glossy catalogs and upbeat recruiting brochures by which many schools live or die. Institutions are promoting as never before the intellectual resort--Club Med with books." (Matthews, 1993)

We do know with a high level of confidence what some of the predictors of campus crime are. Alcohol is involved in 90 to 95% of campus crime and we know that alcohol use among the current high school and college-age population is on the rise. Drinking for the specific purpose of getting drunk is now reported by one in three students who drink. A Harvard University study released in 1992 showed a radical increase in students drinking to get drunk since 1977. Much campus crime is thus impulsive, not premeditated and, therefore, less likely to lend itself to prevention through education programs. (ibid.) Given that drinking behavior is now (and perhaps always has been) normative in college environments, a confluence of factors appears to be emerging which may presage continuing escalation of violence on campus.

Although many campuses appear to be making efforts at reducing crime, efforts aimed at punishing offenders still appear weak. A recent survey of 3300 deans, security officers, and residence directors, for example, indicated that only 56.4% of reported physical assaults resulted in any institutional penalty whatsoever. Respondents also indicated that in less than half of the cases where penalties were issued would the action have constituted an effective

deterrent to future violence. (Pezza, 1995) Another survey estimated that RA's are likely to report only half of the instances of underage drinking which come to their attention.

Studies have consistently shown that the most likely profile of the student-criminal is one who is male, is likely to have come from a pathological family unit, to be a member of a fraternity, to be an academically marginal or poor student, and also an athlete. (Matthews, 1993) Basketball and football players in particular have been found to be 38% more likely to be involved in campus crime than other males on campus. (Pezza & Bellotti, 1995) Further, according to Dorothy Siegel of the Violence Prevention Center of Towson State University in Maryland, 80% of campus crime is student-on-student crime, only 20% is committed by intruders. The perpetrators are being admitted, they are not nearly as likely to be trespassers. These criminals are still generally being dealt with in student courts where the proceedings, the records, and even the membership of the courts are kept secret.

Countless instances of campus violence could be chronicled. It is now estimated that one in three students will be the victim of some type of campus crime. Rape/sexual assault statistics indicate that from 1 in 7 to 1 in 25 will be the victim of such a crime. (Matthews, 1993) The following list of recent events is not meant to be exhaustive nor necessarily representative. These incidents have obviously been publicized; they are probably only the tip of the iceberg.

1966: Charles Whitman climbs the tower at the U. of Texas carrying 3 rifles, one shotgun and two pistols. He killed 14 and wounded 31 others before being killed himself. The night before he had killed his wife and mother.

1970: Nine students killed, 14 wounded by the National Guard at Kent State in Ohio. At another location two days later, police shoot into a dormitory killing two.

1989: A young man in hunting clothes entered a polytechnic school in Montreal and proceeded to gun down 27 people in various locations throughout the building while he shouted that he hated feminists. Fourteen died.

1986: On April 5, 1986, a student/employee of Lehigh University under the influence of alcohol entered the dorm room of Jeanne Clery before dawn and raped, sodomized, tortured, and ultimately killed her.

1990: A student procured a sawed-off shotgun from his vehicle and shot two freshmen in their dormitory room, both of whom died.

1990: A group of students was held hostage at UC Berkeley resulting in one death, eight injuries and one sexual molestation.

1991: At the U. of Iowa, a former physics graduate student who lost a research prize killed five: three profs., one assoc. vice pres., and one staff member.

1991: Temple Junior College in Texas. A sociology chairman was held hostage at gunpoint by a student over a dispute regarding a grade.

1989-1992: A series of student slayings at the Univ. of Florida in Gainesville.

1992: U. of N. Carolina: over a period of eight days, one rape and three assaults.

1992: North Carolina Central Univ.: 6 wounded in campus gun battle.

1992: Wayne Lo, at Simon's Rock College in Massachusetts, shot four and killed a professor and a fellow student.

1993: Incoming students at Brown University are given "survival skills training;" 34 assaults occurred on or near campus this year.

1996: In October, a faculty member of the Univ. of PA was killed near campus as he walked home while attempting to stop the pursesnatching of the woman who was with him. This murder followed a series of 28 robberies and incidents on or near campus at about this time.

1996: In April, a Johns Hopkins student shot another student on campus who had just won an election.

1996: In October at Purdue University, a student who had cocaine and marijuana in his blood shot and killed the dorm counselor who had reported him to the police. He then killed himself.

1996: In October, five athletes were charged with rape at a Halloween party at Southwestern Michigan College. Students reportedly videotaped the event.

1996: In December, two Virginia Tech football players were suspended after being charged with rape and attempted sodomy.

1996: In Sept., Penn State University in State College, PA. A female non-student sniper shot and killed one student and wounded another in front of the student union building.

1997: In February, a student at Indiana University in PA came home drunk to find that someone had eaten his sandwich. Jokingly telling roommates that he'd shoot the individual who had stolen his sandwich, he got out a gun and shot at a paper target on the wall. The bullet penetrated the wall and hit a student

in the next room in the stomach. Upon realizing what he had done, the student then shot and killed himself.

The rape and murder of Jeanne Clery at Lehigh University in April of 1986 represented a particularly important event in the history of crime on campus. The death of their daughter, Jeanne, triggered a long series of crusades by her parents, Howard and Constance Clery, which resulted in federal legislation (the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990) requiring institutions of higher education which accepted federal financial aid funds to annually release information to students and to the public concerning various types of crimes on campus. Much evidence exists, however, to indicate that higher education institutions continue to conceal the true extent of crime on campus often hiding behind the Family Educational Rights and Privileges Act (a.k.a the Buckley amendment), claiming that disciplinary records are part of a student's academic record and must remain private, and also by the underreporting or skewing of data involving campus crime. (Meadows, 1993) A confidential phone survey of 336 institutions done recently, for example, by the Campus Safety and Security Institute in Thorndale, PA found that 108 of these institutions were providing inaccurate and/or incomplete statistics. (Hearing.., 1996) The efforts of the Clerys and the organization they founded, Security on Campus, have done much to bring the problem of campus crime to light throughout the nation. Numerous campus newspapers have also been active in forcing universities to make public the proceedings of secret campus hearing boards.

Common threads emerge when the history of universities is reviewed from the Middle Ages to the present. Universities have had a long history of functioning autonomously. The

privileges granted to students and faculty began as an effort to maintain the economic advantages and prestige which accrued to the businessmen, royalty and clergy of the surrounding towns as a result of their presence. These privileges were maintained over the years for economic reasons, the emergence of *in loco parentis* attitudes, supportive court rulings, by tradition, and the long-standing obsession with protecting the image of the institution. The image of the campus as sanctuary, if ever true, is crumbling. Responses are occurring, however. A heightened sense of responsibility and fear of litigation are having an impact on university administrators who feel compelled to, after years of looking the other way in regard to irresponsible behavior, tighten restrictions even at the risk of not attracting students who may be looking forward to attending a campus which has historically provided "four years of suspended consequences" for their behaviors. (Whittaker & Pollard, 1993) Current trends will hopefully lead to safer campus environments for all those who seek what our universities have to offer.

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